

after ages simple folk in their ignorance applied to the gods statements which only held true of the fruits of the earth, and so they came not merely to say but actually to believe that the growth and decay of plants, on which they subsisted,¹ were the birth and the death of gods. Thus they fell into • absurd, immoral, and confused ways of thinking, though all the while the absurdity of the fallacy was manifest. Hence Xcnophanes of Colophon declared that if the Egyptians deemed their gods divine they should not weep for them, and that if they wept for them they should not deem them divine. * For it is ridiculous/ said he, * to lament and pray that the fruits would be good enough to grow and ripen again in order that they may again be eaten and lamented.⁵ But he was wrong, for though the lamentations are for the fruits, the prayers are addressed to the gods, as the causes and givers of them, that they would be pleased to make fresh fruits to spring up instead of those that perish.^{31 2}

Plutarch's In this interesting passage Plutarch expresses his belief

Jh^vvoKhip that the worship of the fruits of the earth was the result of of the a verbal misapprehension or disease of language, as it has the earth been called by a modern school of mythologists, who explain sprang the origin of myths in general on the same easy principle of verbal metaphors misunderstood. Primitive man, on Plutarch's misunder- theory, firmly believed that the fruits of the earth on which

standing.

he subsisted were not themselves gods but merely the gifts of the gods, who were the real givers of all good things. Yet at the same time men were in the habit of bestowing on

these divine products the names of their
divine creators,
either out of gratitude or merely for the
sake of brevity, as
when we say that a man has bought a
Shakespeare or acted
Moliere, when we mean that he has
bought the works of
Shakespeare or acted the plays of
Moliere. This abbreviated
mode of expression was misunderstood
in later times, and so

¹ Tds *Trapovcrias* *rQ>v avayKal&v KCLL* rest is in the heavy
rain time, when,
diroK/oi'^eis. as he says, the god Vishnu
goes to
- Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 69- sleep, and does not wake till
October
71. With the sleep of the Phrygian is well advanced
and the time has
gods we may compare the sleep of come to begin cutting
and crushing the
Vishnu. The toils and anxieties of sugar-cane and
boiling down the juice "
the Indian farmer "are continuous, (W. Crooke, *Natives*
of Northern
and his only period of comparative *India*, London, 1907,
p. 159).